

The Morning Bulletin

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UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1923

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

This public school board spent an evening reviewing its estimates, with the result that there is hope of a substantial though not startling reduction being made in the amounts demanded from the taxpayers of the city. That will be none the less welcome because the board has not been doing its best to keep the public in the way of economy. In the members of that body have at last come to see that squeezing out taxpayers is the sure and certain way to shut up the schools, and every other public service, the city council should be encouraged to call for less spending in other directions, and perhaps even the Provincial Government may take the hint.

ACTING UNDER PRESSURE.

Premier Dunning of Saskatchewan says he would much rather recommend that Western farmers set up a co-operative wheat marketing scheme for the present year than take the same steel-beaten road that the board has. The head of a Government could hardly say more plainly than that he is being forced into a line of action against his judgment; and one from which he apprehends consequences serious enough that he wants to put in a defense beforehand. His position in that regard appears to be that he will not do it in the name of the Greenfield, except that Mr. Dunning has the courage of the foresight to say that he does not approve of what he is doing.

ANOTHER LINE FENCE DISPUTE.

The Poles are not the only Canadians who are at it again — yet again — in a show to the nation. The Lithuanians complain to the League of Nations that the Poles have invaded their country. That perhaps depends on the angle from which the disputed territory is viewed. Likely enough the Poles claim that the country in question is not their own, and that the Lithuanians have been occupying it wrongfully. In any case, what the League can do about it is not clear. The League can talk sense to countries which are threatening to go to war but have not yet got their blood hot. When the bullets have already begun to fly, the military staffs have to create a public outcry. Such contracts in the future, if they are not taking orders or advice from Geneva on other questions, if France can not call off the Poles it is rather doubtful if the League can do it.

THE LAKE THROTS ENQUIRY.

It may be that the lake shipping companies kept strictly within the letter of the law in the means they employed to boost the charges for carrying Western wheat last fall. But the shipping companies insist that they did not do so, and that they were not to blame. All that can be established is that they made a number of things work together to the end of collecting "all that the traffic would bear." In fact the shipping agents thus far examined do not seem

to have tried to deny or evade that conclusion. Which rather suggests that the ship-owners have been assured by their legal sharpies that they have nothing to fear from the law as it stands. In that case the grain-grower who was beaten out of the benefit of the reduced rail rates to B. William will not be the only person to be beaten out of any body go to jail for it. Probably the most that can be hoped for is that the disclosures before the commission will show Parliament where to put the "hooks" in the new bill that it is to be passed at this session to restrict the impulse toward commercial combinations.

PRUSSIANS ONLY NEED APPLY.

The Provincial Government, it is said, plans to "shake up" the personnel of the Public Utilities Commission. With a view it is to be supposed, of getting rid of some of the present members, and of installing others who may be more sympathetic toward the ideals of the Ministers in regard to matters with which the commission is charged. It is a good idea.

In what direction the mind of the Government runs on that subject is indicated by the provisions of a new bill now in process of being converted into law by the Legislature. The new measure is to replace the present statutory authority under which the board was to define the boundaries and length of its jurisdiction. In general the effect of the new law will be to give the board wider powers than it has as yet possessed, powers wider than any autocratic body ever should possess in a country that is supposed to be governed by representatives of its people, and which in some cases will amount to the absolute negation of contracts.

It is specified that the board shall have power: (a) — To deal with public utilities and the proprietors thereof.

(b) — To inquire into the merit of the application of authority for permission to raise money by way of debentures or upon the security of stock, and to grant or refuse such permission.

(c) — To supervise the expenditure of money by a local authority.

(d) — To deal with the financial affairs of local authorities.

(e) — To grant permission for the extension of the time for repaying the indebtedness incurred by local authorities for the cost of municipal public works.

(f) — To separate land from an urban municipality.

(g) — To order compromises of tax arrears.

(h) — To deal with plans of subdivision.

(i) — To administer the Sale of Shares Act.

(j) — To perform such other duties as now or shall hereafter from time to time be assigned to the board by statute or under statutory authority.

The bill is naturally long in proportion to the list of subjects dealt with. Generally the purpose of it is to turn over to the commission powers which should be exercised by the Attorney General, powers which the Minister of Finance should exercise; powers which no responsible Government here or elsewhere has hitherto presumed to exercise; and any other unthought-of responsibilities which the Ministers may in future wish distributed among their own in-comes.

Public interest will perhaps call for an in-comes. The board is to be given control over utilities owned or operated by the Government of the Province; over utilities owned or operated by any person or company; and utilities owned or operated by any local authority. Such a power will be a by-law bringing it under the act.

In respect to all such utilities the authority of the board is to be supreme. It will have jurisdiction over service, rates and streets. Contracts made between municipalities and other companies will be subject to the board's review and control or to review their provisions. In brief, what was done to Edmonton in the case of the gas company can hereafter be done to any municipality in the province in connection with any agreement in which it may have entered, or may in future enter, with a company or companies.

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